



New Europe College

June 22–23, 2017

Bucharest

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

‘CIVIC ACTIVISM AND PROTEST CULTURE IN THE BLACK SEA COUNTRIES’

During the past decades civic engagement underwent remarkable changes throughout the world. Activism is today a versatile and dynamic phenomenon, continuously adapting to the challenges of the digital age and fueled by social media, and it can be productively analyzed by political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists or communication experts. While western democracies have been facing a steady decline in civic engagement, the countries around the Black Sea have seen increasing civic activism. For some, this has hailed the emergence of a protest culture that has been shaping their domestic political scene and their positioning within the international one.

Over the past decade, in cities throughout the wider Black Sea region, in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Turkey or Ukraine, huge crowds of people rallied in support of a variety of causes, ranging from broader political issues such as the westward or eastward orientation of a country to societal challenges such as corruption and social justice. Originating in, and as responses to complicated national and international political contexts, the protests are frequently backed by activists outside traditional political parties or civil society organizations. With all countries in the Black Sea area divided by huge social disparities that are clearly expressed in electoral preferences, political unrest has been regarded ambivalently, either as a marker of growing civic awareness or a threat to stability and political order in the age of global populism.

As multifaceted, contemporary phenomena, rising civic activism and protest culture in the Black Sea countries deserve a closer study by scholars working in the social sciences and the humanities.

It is the aim of this workshop to do so, with theoretical and empirical case-studies on topics which might, for example, refer to the following topics:

- the changes in the civic literacy and the institutionalization of civic learning and engagement in the Black Sea countries over the past decades;
- representations of protests in different historical and cultural contexts;
- the making of elites, civil society and active citizenship;
- civic awareness and forms of communicating civic matters and concerns;
- social media, civic engagement and a new protest culture;

- sites of civic involvement – virtual and physical spaces of protest;
- protests and violence – verbal and physical encounters;
- protests as challenges to democratic values;
- governance and civic engagement – discourse, decision-making, resolution;
- the institutionalization of protests;
- protests as lifestyle;
- civic engagement and artistic expressions;
- the morphology of protests.

The organizers invite scholars working on relevant topics to submit their proposals for a presentation (20 minutes) during our workshop. They can relate both to more theoretical questions and to case studies relevant for the wider Black Sea area.

Proposals for papers (maximum 300 words) and a short (one-page) CV of the applicant should be submitted to the address cardeleanu@nec.ro **no later than 15 April 2017**. Applicants will be notified about the result of the selection process by the end of April 2017.

This academic event will be hosted by New Europe College, an Institute for Advanced Study in the humanities and social sciences in Bucharest.

The organizers will cover all expenses (international and domestic transport, accommodation, subsistence) and will provide necessary support to participants from the Black Sea countries in getting visas to enter Romania.

On behalf of the organizing committee:

Professor Dirk Lehmkuhl, political scientist, GCE, University of St. Gallen

Dr. Constantin Ardeleanu, historian, New Europe College, Bucharest

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